



■ Auditions for one of Bahrain's most popular and much-awaited talent contests kicked off yesterday with young aspiring musicians showcasing their skills. Bud Live Music auditions at JJ's Irish Restaurant, Adliya, attracted several local bands unlike previous years when only bands employed by a hotel or restaurant took part. Contestants performed popular rock and metal songs as they were judged by Radio Bahrain personalities Imran Al Aradi and Paul Fraser, and Fact magazine editor-in-chief Tony Sidgwick. The grand finale will be held at Amwaj Islands with American Rock legends Skid Row on December 9 from 3pm to 10pm. The winning band will receive a cash prize of BD1,000, with BD500 for the runners-up and BD250 for the third position. Above, the "Twister" band performs.



■ Schoolchildren from Riffa Views International School took part in a food fundraising drive for the Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BSPCA). The children donated dog and cat food to BSPCA secretary Beverly Moss at the new shelter in Askar. Above, Ms Moss, centre, with some of the children at the presentation.

The dying craft of silversmiths...

A BAHRAINI silversmith with more than half a century of experience has voiced concerns that the craft he loves is on the verge of dying out.

Abdul Razaq Al Roomy plies his trade in the Bab Al Bahrain area of Manama suq, having opened his shop A R Al Roomy in 1963.

However, the 79-year-old father-of-five warned that a lack of interest in the silver industry, the introduction of machinery and a drop in business over the past decade were threatening the craft's survival.

"The craft will not be preserved as today's youth choose to take easy jobs," he told the GDN.

"They are not interested in a

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silver-making career, but they will also get bored as we don't get a lot of customers.

"No one will take my place after I am gone as my only son is an academic doctor."

Mr Al Roomy, who is originally from Iraq, said the introduction of machinery had a major impact on the profession – directly affecting the income of highly skilled silversmiths.

"We didn't have machines back then like they do now, hence it was difficult to create a piece of jewellery and took some time," he said.

He explained that meant the work of silversmiths was becoming less and less appreciated.

"In the past, customers

appreciated handmade work and used to pay me more if they liked a piece," he recalled.

"Today, customers don't value the handiwork and ask me to reduce the price of jewellery."

Mr Al Roomy, who was trained in the silversmith craft by his father and uncle from the age of 15, described how he used to work 19-hour days to create the perfect handcrafted pieces.

"It's the only profession I ever had," he said.

"I used to work from 4am until 11pm and only stopped for my lunch break.

"But for the last 10 years I work for two hours a day because of my health, age and mostly the number of customers, which dropped

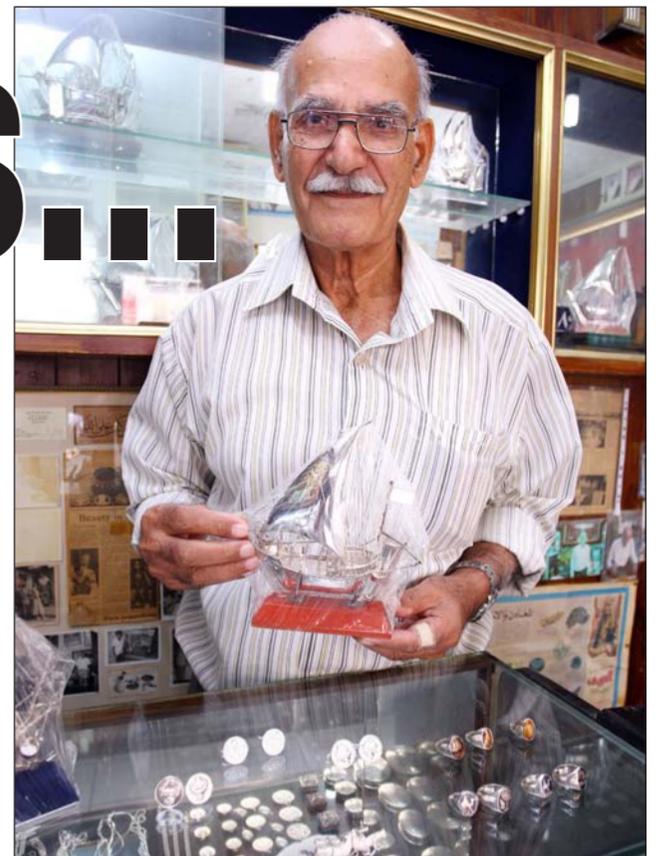
dramatically."

He first came to Bahrain as a 10-year-old and described how he would sometimes spend days creating complicated pieces, carving decorations such as palm trees and calligraphy onto silver jewellery.

To this day he continues to use the same tools he learnt to use as a teenager, such as iron scissors and a hammer, to create jewellery and ornaments such as dhows.

"In the first years of opening the shop, we carved jewellery with black silver – which made us the first to come up with such jewellery at that time," recalled Mr Al Roomy.

"I'd carve palm trees and writings on rings, some of which I still keep as memories," he said.



■ Mr Al Roomy shows some of his handcrafted work



■ Students and teachers from the Japanese School visited grade five students of Bahrain Bayan School as part of an exchange programme. The students engaged in activities that reflected the culture of Bahrain such as pottery painting, traditional games and dressing up in traditional Bahraini clothes. The aim was to give students from both schools a chance to share their experiences and help them learn and understand different cultures. Above, the students and their teachers during the visit. Right, Japanese School students dressed in traditional Bahraini clothes.

